THE GOVERNOR GENERAL

Before being admitted to the Governor General, all petitioners were interrogated by his counsel, Batarevich, who helped them formulate their requests. He looked at my petition and said warmly, "Jilkino is no place for you. People should not be settled where there is no work for them." He made a note on my petition and took me to the office of the Governor General.

Kniazev—a tall man with a dignified appearance and a mild voice—met us at the door of his huge study. He read my petition silently and asked Batarevich, "You know the request? Do we have precedents to rest on?"

"Oh, yes! A fully justified request!"

"I am glad you think so," replied Kniazev. He wrote his decision on my petition and passed it on to Batarevich for action. I was ready to leave, but he stopped me and said, "Now we can chat a little."

After a casual remark about the Siberian climate, Kniazev remarked, "I know that you and your friends have definite political convictions and I respect those who do what they consider right. But I have often observed that persons who have served their term for belonging to an illegal party believe this term legalizes their status as S-D, S-R, or Anarchist for the rest of their lives. The government does not share this idea, and I have no power to change this situation. May I ask you to do me a favor: whatever you do, watch your step. Do not talk much with people whom you do not know. Do not keep at home documents and notes that can be turned against you. Use caution in your correspondence. Do not let the gendarmes catch you."

I promised the Governor General to pass his words on to other political exiles. He walked with me to the door of his office. I thanked him and he, in turn, thanked me.

The official reply to my petition came in two or three days. The inspector of prisons informed me that, by order of the Governor General, I was permitted to live in Irkutsk until further notice.

RETURN TO POLITICAL LIFE

In Irkutsk I met many people who knew me either from St. Petersburg or from my writings in different magazines. I found myself in the center of local politics, which consisted mainly of endless talks about what was going on in the country and what was going to happen. But political life all over Russia was much the same.

Irkutsk was a significant administrative and cultural center. It had